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Foreword

Since the turn of the century, scientists have become increasingly interested in the effects of tobacco on health. Only within the past few decades, however, has a broad experimental and clinical approach to the subject been manifest; within this period the most extensive and definitive studies have been undertaken since 1950.

Few medical questions have stirred such public interest or created more scientific debate than the tobacco-health controversy. The interrelationships of smoking and health undoubtedly are complex. The subject does not lend itself to easy answers. Nevertheless, it has been increasingly apparent that answers must be found.

As the principal Federal agency concerned broadly with the health of the American people, the Public Health Service has been conscious of its deep responsibility for seeking these answers. As steps in that direction it has seemed necessary to determine, as precisely as possible, the direction of scientific evidence and to act in accordance with that evidence for the benefit of the people of the United States. In 1959, the Public Health Service assessed the then available evidence linking smoking with health and made its findings known to the professions and the public. The Service's review of the evidence and its statement at that time was largely focussed on the relationship of cigarette smoking to lung cancer. Since 1959 much additional data has accumulated on the whole subject.

Accordingly, I appointed a committee, drawn from all the pertinent scientific disciplines, to review and evaluate both this new and older data and, if possible, to reach some definitive conclusions on the relationship between smoking and health in general. The results of the Committee's study and evaluation are contained in this Report.

I pledge that the Public Health Service will undertake a prompt and thorough review of the Report to determine what action may be appropriate and necessary. I am confident that other Federal agencies and nonofficial agencies will do the same.

The Committee's assignment has been most difficult. The subject is complicated and the pressures of time on eminent men busy with many other duties has been great. I am aware of the difficulty in writing an involved technical report requiring evaluations and judgments from many different professional and technical points of view. The completion of the Committee's task has required the exercise of great professional skill and dedication of the highest order. I acknowledge a profound debt of gratitude to the Committee, the many consultants who have given their assistance, and the members of the staff. In doing so, I extend thanks not only for the Service but for the Nation as a whole.

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